



Common Questions about

Alternatives to Vaccines

Doesn't breastfeeding offer babies natural protection?

Breastfeeding offers protection against some infections, such as colds, ear infections and diarrhea, by providing infants with immune proteins from the mother's milk. These immune proteins fight infection as they are passing from the infants' mouth into the stomach and gastrointestinal tract. Vaccines stimulate the infant's own immune system to produce immune proteins to fight infection against very specific diseases. Despite its many benefits, breastfeeding is not effective in preventing contagious, vaccine-preventable diseases.¹ There are no effective alternatives to immunization for protection against serious and sometimes deadly infectious diseases.

- Vaccine-preventable diseases have been around for thousands of years. Even when breastfeeding was more consistently done than it is today, many infants died from these diseases.
- The vaccines recommended for use in infants do not interfere with the beneficial immunity gained from breastfeeding. Likewise, breastfeeding does not interfere with the infant's ability to be effectively vaccinated.

Are there natural remedies (e.g., herbs, vitamins) or approaches (e.g., homeopathy) that can be used in lieu of manufactured vaccines?

No. While many feel that herbs and vitamins have beneficial effects, there are no herbs, vitamins, or approaches to health care that can replace the benefits of vaccines.

- To be protected from preventable infectious diseases, a person must have been naturally infected or vaccinated.
- Boosting the immune system in general through herbs or vitamins does not offer specific protection from the viruses and bacteria that cause vaccine-preventable diseases.

Source:

- ¹ Hanson LA. Breastfeeding provides passive and likely long-lasting active immunity. *Ann Allergy Asthma Immunol* 1998;81:523-533.

Recommended books and Web sites on this topic:

Humiston SG and Good C. *Vaccinating your child: Questions & answers for the concerned parent.* Atlanta: Peachtree Publishers; 2000.

Offit PA and Bell LM. *Vaccines: What every parent should know*, revised edition. New York: IDG Books; 1999.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (www.aap.org).

The National Immunization Program (www.cdc.gov/nip).

Ask Dr. Weil (www.pathfinder.com/drweil).